



It's Important to Contact Your State Agency for Persons with Disabilities Before Age 22!

For individuals with disabilities, turning 22 often marks a significant transition point where they move from youth services, typically managed by educational systems, to adult services. This change can affect access to support systems like vocational training, independent living assistance, healthcare, and more. Therefore, it is essential to engage with your state's agency for persons with disabilities well before the age of 22 to ensure a smooth and successful transition. Below are the key reasons why early contact is crucial.

Seamless Transition from Youth Services to Adult Services

By age 22, many support services provided through special education, such as individualized education plans (IEPs) and school-based therapies, end. Adult services become available at this point, and early engagement ensures there are no gaps in care.

- **Continuity of Care:** Early contact helps bridge the gap between youth services and adult support programs, ensuring the individual continues to receive necessary assistance without interruption.
- **Timely Eligibility Determination:** States often require evaluations to determine eligibility for adult services. This process can take time and starting it early guarantees that the individual is ready to access services when needed.

Access to Adult Support Services

State agencies provide essential services and resources for adults with disabilities, which can vary based on individual needs.

- **Employment and Vocational Training:** Many individuals with disabilities require continued job coaching, skill-building, and employment placement support. Agencies help facilitate these services to foster independence and community involvement.
- **Independent Living Support:** State agencies can assist with housing options, from supported living to more independent arrangements, helping individuals with disabilities live in environments suited to their needs.
- **Healthcare Coordination:** Accessing adult healthcare, including ongoing therapies and medical management, is a critical area where state agencies can provide assistance.

Personalized Service Plans

As the individual approaches adulthood, state agencies work with families to create a **Personalized Service Plan (PSP)** or **Individualized Service Plan (ISP)**. These plans outline the specific services and supports the individual will receive in adulthood.

- **Customized Care:** The service plan is designed to meet the unique needs of the individual, addressing areas such as independent living, vocational goals, and daily care needs.

- **Collaborative Approach:** The development of these plans often involves input from the family, the individual, and professionals, ensuring that the goals are achievable and aligned with the individual's preferences and needs.

Navigating Financial and Legal Transitions

Turning 22 may also involve financial and legal changes, which can be challenging to navigate without assistance. State agencies can help families address these issues by providing guidance on:

- **Government Benefits:** State agencies assist in applying for and managing benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, and other programs that provide financial support.
- **Legal Considerations:** Agencies can advise on important legal arrangements such as establishing guardianship, power of attorney, or special needs trusts to protect the individual's rights and financial future.

Reducing Stress for Families

Transitioning to adulthood is a stressful time for both the individual and their family.

Engaging with state agencies early helps alleviate some of this stress by providing:

- **Guidance and Support:** Agencies offer expert guidance, helping families navigate the complex system of adult services.
- **Peace of Mind:** Knowing that services are in place and available as the individual transitions into adulthood provides peace of mind to families, ensuring that their loved one's needs will be met.

Contacting your state's agency for persons with disabilities before the age of 22 is vital to ensuring a smooth and effective transition from youth to adult services. Early engagement allows families to plan ahead, access critical resources, and develop personalized service plans that support the individual's long-term well-being and independence. By taking action early, families can secure the best possible outcomes for their loved ones, avoiding gaps in services and reducing the stress associated with this major life change.

For a directory of state agencies, you can visit the <https://www.nasddd.org/state-agencies/>